

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Approved For Release

2003/08/18 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150006-7

# Memorandum

TO : DR

DATE: 20 May 1975

FROM : DIO/SEA

SUBJECT: Rescue of MAYAGUEZ and Its Crew (Intelligence Post Mortem) (U)

1. (U) Enclosure 1 has gone to the White House MINUS TABS D, E, and F in response to the 18 May Presidential memorandum to the DCI (Enclosure 2). The text in paragraphs 5 and 6 of Enclosure 1 (pages 2 and 3) has been modified accordingly.

2. (S) Two criticisms first:

--- Page 1, Paragraph 1: NSA's instructions to its field elements were prolific, but its substantive coverage of the MAYAGUEZ was not. CIA has been notified.

--- Tab A, first paragraph: DI has searched its records and can find no NSA report quoting the KC as stating they intended to seize ships operating in their "territorial waters."

3. (S) You will note that Tabs E and F of enclosure 1 bear on the Intelligence Community's "alerting problem" and events in the Gulf of Thailand prior to the seizure of MAYAGUEZ.

--- In Tab E, General Wilson views the performance of various operations/intelligence centers (DoD among them -- paragraph 5, page 3) with a jaundiced eye. He suggests that the centers themselves, the NOIWON, and the alerting of Principals in time of crisis be improved (paragraph 8, pages 4-5). You are, of course, aware of the close ADIN-DDO relationship.

\*NSC Review Completed for Pg 22, para 1 & Pgs 23  
THRU 29\*

--- In Tab F, General Wilson's thesis is that Intelligence should have been more alert to the possibility of a MAYAGUEZ-type incident. Much of his statistical data, however, are suspect. Fifteen of the 17 vessels he cites as having been fired on or detained were fishing vessels or their equivalent. Three of his eight incidents (those on 4 May) probably involved the same ship; three more involved fishing vessels; and only two (the first and last) involved merchant ships, one of which was evidently detained.

DIA & DOS review(s) completed.

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4. (S) Tabs D, E, and F, however, explain Mr. Colby's interest in expanding the time frame of the President's request for an intelligence post mortem so that it will include events of a week to 10 days before MAYAGUEZ. In this regard, I have told NIO/SSEA (tactfully but firmly) that this agency is opposed to going beyond the parameters of the President's request and that the DIA response will be so tailored. The ball is now in CIA's court.

5. (U) As you know, the 22 May USIB meeting will take up the MAYAGUEZ affair. My understanding is that the discussions will focus on the issues raised by General Wilson in Tabs E and F. DI is now preparing a talking paper for you which will deal with them.

6. (U) DI-6, which took the lead in preparing the response to subparagraph b of the Presidential memorandum, is now working on subparagraphs a and c. I will continue to collaborate.

2 Enclosures a/s

Copy to DI

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Approved For Release 2003/08/18 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150006-7

20 May 1975

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Gerald R. Ford  
The President of the United States

SUBJECT : The Rescue of the SS Mayaguez and Its Crew

1. The attached is in response to your memorandum of 18 May 1975 requesting the instructions, verbal or written, issued by the intelligence community during the Mayaguez incident.

2. The responses to the other requests in your memorandum will be forwarded by close of business Friday, 23 May.

W. E. Colby

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DRAFT

## INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM\*

SUBJECT: The Rescue of the SS Mayaguez and Its Crew

*The following memorandum covers the instructions, verbal or written, which were issued by the intelligence community during the time of the Mayaguez incident.*

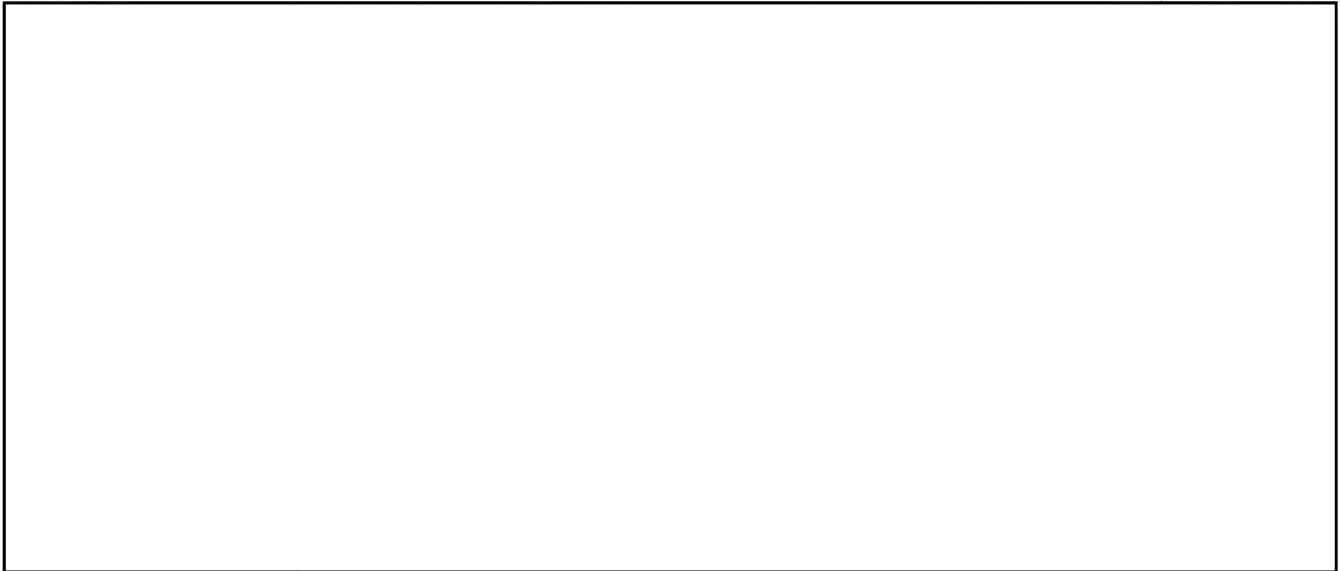
\* \* \* \* \*

1. The National Security Agency (NSA). NSA was prolific both in coverage and instructions to field components during the Mayaguez affair. Tab A contains a listing of all instructions forwarded to NSA field elements prior to and during the Mayaguez incident.
2. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). During the period of the Mayaguez incident, DIA relied primarily on secure telephone contacts for issuing instructions and making requests, both within the Washington intelligence community and to various field components. Tab B contains a log of DIA activities relating to the Mayaguez affair.
3. Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State (INR). Although INR did not issue any specific instructions to the field for coverage of the capture of the Mayaguez and

\* This memorandum was prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

reactions thereto, the various policy desks within the Department did put all overseas embassies on alert to report reactions to developments relating to the Mayaguez incident.

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5. The Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). In addition to coordinating the activity of the Intelligence Community during the course of the Mayaguez affair, the DCI levied two tasks on the Intelligence Community Staff: (a) to determine how intelligence procedures relating to the handling of CRITIC messages could be improved; and (b) why intelligence on earlier seizures of vessels had not been forthcoming in time to alert other ships planning to transit near Cambodia. Tab D contains extracts from the DCI's morning meetings with his key staff personnel on these matters. The responses of the Intelligence Community Staff to these two requests appear at Tab E and Tab F.

6. In addition, the National Intelligence Officer for South and Southeast Asia, acting for the DCI, was in constant

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secure telephone communication with the various components of  
the intelligence community to ensure that each agency provided  
maximum coverage of the Mayaguez affair.

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<u>Time</u>	<u>Description</u>
12 May (AM)	Asked Naval Ocean Surveillance Information Center (NOSIC) for list of all ships enroute to or scheduled for Cambodian port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville). Specific info was to include shipname, flag, voyage departure, current location, and cargo, if known.
	Asked NOSIC for list of all ships with 24 hours steaming time of Gulf of Thailand.
	Asked NOSIC for description and dispositions on Cambodian merchant fleet.
	TELECON to Subic Bay, Philippines requesting debriefing of any refugees with knowledge of Poulo Wai Islands.
	TELECON to U-Tapao Refugee Center for any information concerning Poulo Wai Islands.
	TELECON to NSA [ ] re NSA tasking for dedicated coverage of KC comms activity in off shore area.
	TELECON to NOSIC [ ] requesting information on crew, home port, last port of call and destination of Mayaguez.
	DIA INDICOM request to CINCPAC for information on nationality status of Poulo Wai Islands.
	Msg USDAO Bangkok requesting info on events of the seizure of Panamanian ship on 7 May.
	Poulo Wai photo research initiated to identify available aerial photography.
121400 EDT	DIA (DC) Memo to Joint Reconnaissance Center (JRC) requesting urgent requirement for photo coverage Poulo Wai. Provided general officer represented to OPSDEPS Conference in NMCC.
121544 EDT	DIA/J3 message to CINCPAC, requesting continuous P-3 coverage of northern Gulf of Siam multiple RF-4C recce flights of Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville and Poulo Wai, and U-2R coverage of Poulo Wai.

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Description

121708 EDT

DIA (DC) message to PACOM, SAC and Strategic Reconnaissance Center (SRC) providing detailed operational reconnaissance guidance.

121557 EDT

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13 May (AM)

DIA INDICOM to CINCPAC - urgent request from Cambodian refugees relating to Kaoh Tang Island.

13 May (AM)

TELECON to NOSIC requesting information on number and status of Cambodian merchant fleet.

TELECON to State Dept requesting any information on news broadcast reporting that the Mayaguez will be released after "US apologies and return of Khmer aircraft that were flown to Thailand.

INDICOM to CINCPAC for info on KC combat strength, and weapons, type and number of Islands. Any info available from pilot debriefing.

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130710 EDT

DIA concurred with PACOM for utilization of OLYMPIC TORCH (U-2R) as airborne relay for U.S. forces communications.

1300-1400 EDT

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Approved For Release 2003/08/18 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150006-7

Description

132000 EDT

FBIS instructed to emphasize Cambodian coverage regarding Mayaguez incident.

1800 EDT

[REDACTED]

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131807 EDT

DIA (DC) msg to ARFCOS/CINCPAC concurs in CINCPACs recommended delivery procedures for expediting photo materials to Washington.

140054 EDT

[REDACTED]

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140200 EDT

Coordinated potential targets for possible B-52 strikes in Cambodia.

140450 EDT

The DI informed that the NIO for South and Southeast Asia had identified [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] that was knowledgeable of Kaoh Tang Island. We were requested to determine if secure communications could be established with the source and to draw up a set of questions for a debrief. When secure communications could not be established we decided, based on a review of preliminary information, that the source's knowledgeability warranted immediate transportation to the Pentagon for a debrief with the Services, Joint Staff and DIA. Source arrived here at 1530 for a successful debrief.

141200 EDT

Drafted ultimatum message to KC.

141800 EDT

TELECON involving WHSR, NMCC, CINCPAC and NSA regarding transmission of ultimatum to KC.

[REDACTED]

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STAFF

DATE-TIME GROUP

132158Z

CITY

DIRECTOR

HAS DATA REFERENCE NUMBER

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TO: IMMEDIATE

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING WIDE RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH KHMER COMMUNIST SEIZURE OF VESSEL NAYAGUEZ AND HOLDING IT JUST OFF OF KOH TANG ISLAND, LOCATED ABOUT 30 MILES SOUTHWEST OF KOMPONG SON. IF IT DECIDED THAT OPTION WHICH IS SELECTED INVOLVES LIMITED MILITARY ACTION AGAINST KOH TANG ISLAND TO INCLUDE LANDING MARINES, THEN IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL FOR HQS TO HAVE PROMPT REPORTING VIA IMMEDIATE PRECEDENCE TRAFFIC OF HOST COUNTRY REACTION TO THIS UNITED STATES MOVE. E-2, IMPDET-H

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CL BY: 011491

Lehman highlighted the latest reports on the seizure of the U.S. ship Mayaguez by Cambodian armed forces in the Gulf of Thailand. The Director observed that he had been briefed in preparation for the NSC meeting scheduled this morning on this topic. Later in the meeting, Wilson noted that he would be meeting with those responsible for conveying CRITIC messages to Watch Office principals, in light of the President's concern that he and Dr. Kissinger, as well as others, were not immediately advised of the incident. The Director observed that a post-mortem on this matter by [ ] needs identification of conclusions and some recommendation on how to avoid redundancy in reacting to CRITIC's.

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EXTRACT FROM MORNING MEETING MINUTES OF 14 May 1975

Lehman updated information on the Mayaguez situation, as reported in today's NID, and called attention to an unconfirmed report that a Swedish ship in the Gulf of Thailand has come under fire (from surface elements rather than aircraft). The Director asked for a compilation of Cambodian air and naval order of battle prior to today's NSC meeting, and Carver assured him that it is in preparation. The Director noted that ships passing Poulo Wai and Koh Tang Islands had been stopped by Cambodia prior to the seizure of the Mayaguez and asked Wilson to determine why intelligence on these earlier incidents hadn't been forthcoming in time to alert shipping.

EXTRACT FROM MORNING MEETING MINUTES OF 16 May 1975

Wilson reviewed the sequence of events in notifying top Government officials of the Mayaguez incident. He also reported that responsibility for issuing shipping advisories--formerly a Navy matter--now resides in the Hydrographic Office of the Defense Mapping Agency.

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SUBJECT: Report on Community Handling of  
Mayaguez Incident

1. I convened a meeting today of operations/watch officers (or their representatives) from CIA, the White House Situation Room, NSA, the State Department, and DIA. Much of the conversation at that meeting confirmed information conveyed to you last night in a preliminary memorandum on the same subject. The conversation also helped to crystalize our own thinking about the alerting problem in general, and we offer you some conclusions and recommendations in para. 8 of this paper.

The Problem of Delay

2. The principal immediate problem seems to be: Why weren't the principals concerned notified of the contents of the initial CRITIC messages within 15 or so minutes of these messages in the ops center? The first three messages arrived between 0512 and 0526 EDT. You were notified at 0630; Secretary Schlesinger learned of the messages some time between 0700 and 0730; General Scowcroft at 0730; the President around 0800 (courtesy of [redacted]); and Secretary Kissinger some time after his regular morning staff meeting had begun at 0800.

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variety of reasons, including: (1) concern that information provided in the initial CRITICs was inadequate, that further data was needed

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before principals could be properly briefed; (2) a belief that the US would be unable to react immediately, at least with force, and that therefore time was not of the essence\*; and (3) related to this, a conviction that principals should not be awakened at home at, say, 0530 or 0600, when they could "just as well" be informed upon their arrival at the office at, say, 0700 or 0730.\*\*

4. As far as we can tell, none of the principals were initially upset about receiving the news when they did, with the exception of Secretary Kissinger. The Secretary, by the way, may have first learned of the incident from the President, i.e., before he was briefed by his own people. (If so, this clearly was the fault of the State Operations Center, which did not make an effort to alert Kissinger's aides before his morning staff meeting.\*\*\*)

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\* NMCC, for example, reportedly advised State ops around 0635 that, in view of the non-availability of US forces, the matter at that point was primarily diplomatic in nature.

\*\* CIA ops officers were aware that you would probably awaken around 0630 and deliberately delayed informing you until about that time.

\*\*\* The State Ops Center, not INR, is charged with alerting the Secretary.

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5. Some other problems, real or potential, have emerged from our investigation. NOIWON was not used, and all the operations centers agree with us that it should have been. The alerting mechanisms in both DoD and State are divided into operations and intelligence sections, which are supposed to be in close touch with one another but, in fact, sometimes are not. Finally, in this list, many INR Watch Officers are junior and inexperienced.

6. Yet another aspect of the problem deserves further attention, viz. the concepts and qualifications of individual operations/watch officers. Bureaucratic changes, the invigoration of NOIWON, and other conceivable proposals can only do so much if these officers are not aware of a truth propounded by [ ] (a truth which would seem to have some application to the events of yesterday):

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In a warning situation, the quality of indicators varies inversely with the potential seriousness of the event being reported on. If the latter is high, the warning threshold is reached with low quality indicators (indicators which under normal circumstances would be discounted).

The problem is to ensure that watch officers understand the relationship of these variables.

#### Some Non-Problems

7. Fortunately, the CRITIC system functioned as it should have. It notified the various Ops Centers immediately and automatically of the

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[REDACTED] had checked and confirmed that all Ops Centers were in possession of the messages. There seems to be no need to revise either NSCID No. 7 or DCID No. 7/1 (both dealing with critical intelligence communications). Moreover, there would seem to be little point as yet in seeking to attack the problem of "sovereign" operations centers head on. But we do have some notions of what might improve the community's ability to handle alerting problems of this (the Mayaguez incident) character.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

8. We have already politely encouraged the several ops centers to reexamine their own procedures, look again at the effects of divided responsibilities (specifically in DoD and State), and consider the desirability of improving the qualifications of ops/watch officers in general and those on duty at night in particular. We suggest three additional measures for your consideration:

-- NOIWON should be strengthened. The IC Staff can propose ways to you and to USIB to ensure the functioning of the network during instant crises (e.g., any ops/watch officer who decides to alert his own principal can be required automatically to activate the net so as to inform the other centers of his decision). This, in turn, could help to reduce delays in informing principals.



-- The sent ops/watch officers in town s uld get

to know one another better and should exchange experiences, problems, etc. (This seemingly minor proposal, if accepted, could produce substantial benefits for the community and its consumers.) I would be happy to play host for bimonthly luncheons dedicated to this purpose.

--- Finally, and most important, it seems to me to be both possible and appropriate for you to take action on your own to alert the President, Secretary Kissinger, and probably Secretary Schlesinger whenever you deem it desirable. It may be that in some instances your "alert" would prove to be redundant. But, as the Mayaguez incident demonstrated, perhaps not. If you concur, we will seek to provide you with a more detailed proposal.

Samuel V. Wilson  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Deputy to the DCI for the  
Intelligence Community

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14 May 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Coverage of Events in the Gulf of Thailand  
Prior to the Seizure of the Mayaguez

1. The first indication of a threat to shipping in the Gulf of Thailand was received by US operational forces on 4 May 1975. On that date, the USS GRIDLEY advised that it had received merchant ship communications reporting the capture of a Korean tanker by an "unidentified Communist ship" in an area in the general vicinity of Poulo Wai island (where the Mayaguez was subsequently captured). This report was immediately passed by the CINCPAC Intelligence Center to the NMCC which, in turn, immediately passed it to the CIA Operations Center. Because of CINCPAC's use of an "Address Indicator Group" (AIG 8724), it is safe to assume that its initial message also went to a large number of operational commands and intelligence centers within the Defense establishment. In any event, there is no evidence that anyone took any action on this report.
2. On 5 May, CINCPAC advised the NMCC (and other addressees) of a US news service report of the incident involving the Korean tanker. This report indicated a Cambodian Communist ship had fired upon, damaged, but failed to stop the Korean tanker. STATE/INR picked up this account of the news service report and a 5 May FBIS item [ ] which dealt with the same incident, and prepared a briefing paper for Mr. Hyland and Secretary Kissinger on the same day. No other element in the US intelligence community took any action.

3. On 6 May, the FBIS reported in its Daily Report that Seoul had advised the South Korean Ministry of Transportation to alert all Korean shipping to the dangers of Communist attacks "on the high seas of Cambodia."

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5. The seizure of the Mayaguez appears to have caught everyone by surprise. Neither CIA, DIA, nor the military services issued any report or analysis which would have indicated their consideration of a potential threat situation. No warning notices were issued.

6. The US agency responsible for issuing "notices to mariners" is the Hydrographic Center of the Defense Mapping Agency. - There is no formal link between this agency and any current intelligence entity, and as far as we can ascertain at this juncture, intelligence concerning incidents in the Gulf of Thailand (2-12 May) was not sent to the Hydrographic Center by any element of the community.

\* A call from my office to the DDA at 1835 Hrs. tonight was answered by a recording.

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Samuel V. Wilson  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Deputy to the DCI for the  
Intelligence Community

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<u>DATE OF REPORT</u>	<u>DATE OF SEIZURE</u>	<u>VESSEL NATIONALITY</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
COMIPAC Message 041029Z	4 May	South Korean	Report from USS GRIDLEY that Korean tanker being captured by unidentified communist ship near Poulo Wai Island.
COMIPAC Message 051112Z	4 May (Same incident as above)	Same incident as above	Report by US News Service that a Cambodian communist ship fired upon but failed to stop Korean ship 200 n.m. S.E. of Thailand.
5 & 6 May FBIS Reports	4 May (Probably same incident as above)	South Korean (1 Vessel)	Seoul broadcasts report of ship fired upon by communist boat. Official warning to all shipping of danger of attack "on high seas of Cambodia.

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ROUTING  
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REMARKS:			
FROM: NAME, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NO.		DATE	

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